



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2013

Contact: Lisa Richardson, 213-361-6980

Email: lrichardson@bos.lacounty.gov

Contact: Lorenza Munoz, 213-458-6279

Email: lmunoz@bos.lacounty.gov

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON CHILD PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN IS PASSED BY THE LOS ANGELES BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has voted to create an independent commission that will be charged with rigorously examining why child protection reforms at the Department of Children and Family Services as well as other county agencies have not been implemented.

Approval of the motion, authored by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Michael D. Antonovich, was greeted with warm reception from child advocates and others involved in reforming the system.

The motion comes on the heels of the deaths of several children, including 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez who died in May amid revelations that the L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services and other agencies failed to intervene despite multiple abuse allegations made by family and teachers.

“After years of reports and multiple recommendations by many organizations to reform DCFS, the county is still being horrified by deaths of children,” said Children’s Commission member Carol Biondi. “Today we have an opportunity to do something about this and I look forward to working with the Blue Ribbon Commission as they focus just as intensely and successfully [on their task] as the jail commission focused on theirs.”

Marqueece Harris-Dawson, head of the Community Coalition, told the board that the creation of a blue ribbon panel had his organization’s “125 percent support.”

"We think it's very important to take another look at DCFS," Harris-Dawson said. "I join everybody in saying there needs to be a wider net rather than a narrow one."

Supervisors Don Knabe and Zev Yaroslavsky voted against the motion, maintaining that a new commission is unnecessary for reforming the Department of Children and Family Services. After the motion passed, the board also approved a motion by Supervisor Knabe that called for the new commission to examine the work of other panels charged with child protection.

Chairman Ridley-Thomas emphasized that the county is committed to child safety and so, much work needs to be done.

"Unfortunately we have fallen short. The status quo needs to be altered," he said. "We have to get down to why these recommendations have not been implemented. So this motion is not intended to reinvent the wheel but to get the wheels turning and get DCFS and other agencies going in the right direction."

Added Supervisor Antonovich: "The Commission will focus on current issues and challenges faced by the Department of Children and Family Services and develop a corrective action plan which includes cooperation among law enforcement agencies, the schools and county departments," he added. "The Commission will also examine the policies and procedures related to staff discipline and promotion."

The new panel will be made up of two members appointed by each supervisor by July 1, 2013 and will investigate all previously delayed or failed efforts to implement reforms and provide recommendations for a feasible plan of action for the county.

#####